

Step up and help your neighbours during ?Be a Donor? month

Written by Sylvia Jones

April is ?Be A Donor? Month. It is an opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of organ donations.

One donor can save up to eight lives, and help the lives of up to 75 individuals by donating tissue. In Ontario there are over 1,500 people waiting for a lifesaving organ transplant, and every three days someone will die because they did not get their transplant in time.

The importance of organ donation is why I was so struck by the story of Logan Boulet of the Humboldt Broncos. The tragedy of the Humboldt Broncos has touched people across Canada. Logan was one of the 16 people who died after the tragic crash with the Humboldt junior hockey team in Saskatchewan. While Logan has passed on, he has left a legacy because he signed his organ donor card. Logan's organ donation saved the lives of six people.

Logan's final act of heroism and compassion has caused a significant spike in the number of people registering to be donors across Canada. According to the Canadian Transplant Society registration are up more than 100 per cent, including a five-fold increase in registration by 16 to 25 year olds.

Ontario needs more donors. Currently there are about 3.9 million Ontarians registered to be a donor, but that is only 32% of the eligible population of 12.3 million. Age does not disqualify you from donating. The oldest organ donor was over 90 years old. Further, current or past medical history does not prevent you from registering to be a donor, because cases are reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

The most recent data from 2016 shows that there are hundreds of people waiting for transplants at any given time. In 2016, 1048 people were waiting for a kidney, 223 people were waiting for a liver, and 60 people were waiting for a heart. In all when you agree to give the gift of life, you are committing to giving your kidney, liver, intestine, heart, lung, and pancreas to someone who needs it to live.

Registering to be an organ donor is easy. All you need to do have is your health care number and visit www.beadonor.ca to update or check your status. As many as 15% of Ontarians believe they are registered, when in fact they are not. I encourage you to check your status, to make sure that you are a donor. Most of all, I encourage you to visit the website and learn more about being a donor and giving the gift of life.